

Institutional protocol for academic journals

UOC

Updated: 14 July 2025

Universitat Oberta
de Catalunya

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1. Scope

The objective and scope of this protocol are to set out the regulatory and editorial framework for the UOC's academic journals, both its scientific and its general-interest journals.

1.1. Scientific journals

A periodical publication identified with an ISSN and a peer review process for the articles published.

1.2. General-interest journals

A periodical publication identified with an ISSN, which publishes articles of academic or scientific interest, which does not subject the articles to a peer review process prior to publication.

2. Editorial criteria

The editorial criteria that must be taken into account when defining the UOC's academic journals are set out below.

2.1. Subject matter

The UOC's academic journals must have a UOC focus, i.e. the subject matter and aims must align with the UOC's areas of expertise and/or be related to the UOC's strategic areas.

2.2. Peer review of articles

The UOC's scientific journals must subject the articles they receive to peer review. There are three possible types of review process, as determined by the journal:

- Single-blind: one review is requested, and both the reviewer and the author remain anonymous.
- Double-blind: two reviews are requested, and both the reviewers and the author remain anonymous.
- Open peer review: reviews are requested from the community and neither party's anonymity is preserved.

In addition, the annual list of reviewers must be published for the research assessment agencies.

Supporting documents:

- [Peer review: General description](#) (UOC, 2015)
- [COPE Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers](#) (Committee on Publication Ethics, 2017)

2.3. Frequency

The UOC's academic journals must commit to a planning procedure to schedule their content, in order to guarantee that publication takes place punctually according to the chosen frequency, whether this is continuous or monthly.

The frequency and months of publication must be stated on the journal's website, and it must be respected. The journal should be published in the first fortnight (from the 1st to the 15th) of each month. It should preferably be published in the first months of the year. Continuous publication and publication before the date established for the ordinary issue are also acceptable.

2.4. Open access and open science

At the UOC, we believe a university should be an open forum that encourages dialogue and the creation and exchange of knowledge. The UOC strives to ensure that the knowledge generated by research is open to everyone, has the highest possible impact and enables us to make faster progress towards sustainable development.

The Executive Board approved the [UOC Open Knowledge Policy](#) on 12 April 2021. The objective of this policy is to establish the institutional framework that enables the UOC to openly share and transfer the knowledge it generates as a result of its research, teaching, innovation and institutional management in the university's various fields.

Apart from this policy, the UOC has also implemented the [Open Knowledge Action Plan](#) in order to address the challenges of the 2030 Agenda by opening up knowledge. This will help raise the university's international profile, as any kind of knowledge published openly and online is inevitably global. The action plan therefore reinforces the production and transfer of knowledge as a whole.

The access policy of the UOC's academic journals that are published according to the principles of [Diamond Open Access](#) fall within this context. The university also undertakes to follow the current standard protocols for metadata exchange (OAI-PMH, OAI-ORE) and those that may appear in the future in order to enhance the visibility and interoperability of the contents of the repository.

Supporting documents:

- [UOC Open Knowledge Policy](#)
- [Open Knowledge Action Plan](#)

2.5. Co-publication

The UOC's academic journals must explore the possibility of working with other institutions and/or journals to raise their profile, build an academic network and, as far as possible, gain additional funding.

3. Management model

The management model for the usual parts of an academic journal is as follows:

Model de gestió de les revistes acadèmiques



Gestió transversal



Actualitzat el juny de 2023

The figure shows the UOC's academic journal management model, which is structured into different interacting areas centred around the academic journal. Each component is explained below:

- Editorial management
Everything related to the journal's content and internal organization:
 - Editorial criteria
 - Action plan
 - Organization of editorial teams
 - Quality plan
 - Editorial production model
 - Peer review

- Dissemination
This focuses on the journal's profile and communications:
 - Indexing plan (ensuring the journal is included in leading databases)
 - Communication plan

- Technology
Technological aspects required for the journal to run smoothly:
 - Outsourced technology services, e.g. editorial management or publishing platforms

- Legal framework
Legal and regulatory considerations:
 - Open knowledge policy
 - Intellectual and industrial property regulations for R&I activities
 - UOC code of research integrity
 - Policy on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) for writing and reviewing articles published in the UOC's scientific and general-interest journals
 - Privacy and data protection policy

- Finance
Management of financial resources:
 - Budget management

- Cross-functional management
The support required for the journal's overall performance, involving various stakeholders:
 - Editorial team
 - Research services
 - Legal advice
 - Suppliers

This model takes a holistic and integrated approach to managing an academic journal, ensuring quality, visibility, legal compliance and sustainability by taking all key areas into account.

In order to build a management model that ensures that all the stages described above are achieved, the UOC academic journals can count on the management plans, the legal framework and the management bodies listed below.

4. Management plans

The following plans must be taken into account when developing and consolidating a journal:

4.1. Action plan

The UOC's academic journals must have an action plan to define the milestones to be achieved. This plan must include the mission, the objectives, the organization of the editorial teams and their roles, the type of content, the peer review system, the editorial production, the budget and the sources of funding. The journal's objectives and commitments in terms of quality, communication, visibility, indexing and social responsibility must also be defined. The three-year action plan is drawn up with the support of the Academic Publications team in the Culture department (Office of the Vice Rector for Alliances, Community and Culture). After the three years covered by the plan have passed, it must be renewed or redefined for further three-year periods.

Supporting documents:

- Action plan template (Appendix 1)
- [Framework definition of the functions of the editorial teams of scientific journals](#)

4.2. Quality plan

The quality plan, which was presented to the Publications Subcommittee in June 2018, aims to ensure that the UOC's scientific journals are competitive instruments for research transfer, and thereby conform to the principle of excellence in research set out in the 2014-2020 Strategic Plan.

The quality plan provides specific and documented instructions for improving formal quality and the quality of the editorial processes for each of the UOC's scientific journals.

The quality of the UOC's scientific journals will be assessed based on their degree of compliance with the criteria set out in this plan. For this reason, the plan states that the UOC's scientific journals must be established and consolidated with the objective of meeting 100% of the criteria that apply to them.

General-interest journals may follow the recommendations and fulfil the criteria in the Quality plan for general-interest journals.

Supporting documents:

- [Quality plan for scientific journals](#): this plan compiles all the quality criteria of Spanish and international assessment agencies that have been made public
- [Quality plan for general-interest journals](#)
- [DOAJ new selection criteria \(2015\)](#) (SEAL system)
- [Evaluating Open Access Journals](#), Toronto Metropolitan University
- [Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing](#), Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association

4.3. Communication plan

The UOC's academic journals must have their own communication plan in force derived from the UOC Communication Plan. This specific plan aims to enhance the visibility of the contents of the journals, and to increase the likelihood of obtaining citations so that they ultimately become benchmarks in their area of knowledge.

Supporting documents:

- [Communication plan for academic journals](#) (2023)

4.4. Internationalization plan

The UOC's academic journals can take the steps suggested to raise a journal's international profile, if the topic allows and makes it advisable, in order to make the contents more visible and achieve greater international impact.

Internationalizing a journal involves inviting other academic institutions to participate in its publication, and encouraging academic staff from other countries to contribute to its editorial activities.

Supporting documents:

- [Decalogue of actions to contribute to the internationalization of scientific journals](#) (2023)

4.5. Visibility and indexing plan

The UOC's academic journals need to increase their visibility in order to improve their positioning. Enhancing their visibility can help increase their downloads and citations for the articles published.

The 2011 Indexing Plan aims to establish a roadmap for indexing academic journals in databases and impact indices. Each UOC journal is therefore committed to implementing the visibility and indexing plan that applies to it, and getting indexed in the major databases in its field. The option of altmetrics as a system for measuring the circulation of journals should be considered, and their use in this area encouraged.

The most important guidelines as regards the editorial standards that the leading databases take into account are as follows:

- Publish at least 12 articles per year, and comply with the stipulated frequency.
- Minimize the period between acceptance and publication of articles.
- Each issue of the journal must contain a similar number of articles.
- Scientific content that has undergone a peer review process must be placed in a different section to content that has not.

Supporting documents:

- [Indexing plan](#) (2023)

4.6. Gender equality policy and good practices for equality, diversity and inclusion

The recommendations are covered in [Ten good practices for gender equality in scientific journals](#) and in this [infographic](#).

4.7. DORA and COARA

Since the UOC signed the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) in December 2018, its scientific journals have complied with all the requirements arising from this adhesion.

- [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#)
- [Report on the signing](#)

5. Contract and budget management

The UOC provides the annual budget necessary to meet the academic journals' editorial needs. The units responsible for budget monitoring are responsible for monitoring the economic impact. The UOC also allocates the necessary resources to support the contractual needs of academic journals.

6. Legal framework

The legal framework covering the UOC's academic journals is as follows:

6.1. Privacy and data protection

For academic journals hosted on information systems overseen by the UOC, the university itself is responsible for its own privacy and data protection policy. For journals that are co-published or hosted on the servers of collaborating institutions, the institution that hosts the information is responsible.

6.2. Transfer of copyright

In order to establish a favourable legal framework for the transfer of content to the databases required by the Indexing Plan, the UOC requires:

- Authors publishing in the UOC's academic journals to assign their authorship and exploitation rights to the UOC, but not exclusively, in accordance with the CC 4.0 international licence framework.
- All journals (except those that apply CC 3.0 Spain due to a decision by the editorial board) publish their contents under Creative Commons licences, and preferably the [CC-BY Attribution 4.0 International](#) licence.

6.3. Advertising policy

Journals must have an advertising policy in accordance with the [Committee on Publication Ethics \(COPE\)](#) transparency criteria. The proposed framework for the UOC is that journals must not accept advertising from third parties.

6.4. Code of ethics

The UOC's scientific journals accept the code of ethics drawn up and published in 2014, which is aligned with the UOC's code of ethics for research and the COPE's ethical principles.

Supporting documents:

- [Statement on publication ethics and misconduct](#) (2011)
- [Committee on Publication Ethics \(COPE\)](#)

6.5. Artificial intelligence

Given the emergence of artificial intelligence in the field of research and education, academic publications must include the recommendation to limit or declare its use.

If generative AI tools are used, this must be properly documented in some section of the submitted manuscript. Otherwise, the manuscript cannot be considered to meet the requirements for authorship.

Supporting documents:

- [Policy on the use of artificial intelligence \(AI\) for writing and reviewing articles published in the UOC's scientific and general-interest journals \(2025\)](#)
- [Research Publishing Ethics Guidelines for Journals](#) (Cambridge University Press)

6.6. Brand and domain protection

Compliance with intellectual and industrial property regulations for R&I activities is mandatory. Additionally, trademark protection should be sought for the name of journals, in accordance with the UOC's internal procedures. Likewise, the domains *.cat*, *.es*, *.com*,

etc. that remain free should be purchased on a preventive basis and their presence on the internet protected.

The journals must be within the *uoc.edu* domain, by means of subdomains, except for co-published journals, in which case the domain must be approved by the Publications Committee.

7. Management bodies

The tasks of the management bodies of the UOC's academic journals are set out below.

7.1. Editorial board of the journal

An academic journal's editor-in-chief must be a full-time faculty member who holds a doctoral degree and has academic expertise in the journal's field of knowledge. They must also have experience in the editorial management of academic publications.

The maximum term for holding a journal's editor-in-chief position is five years, renewable for an additional five years. The university's Executive Board may, in exceptional cases, extend these terms if finding a replacement is difficult due to the expertise or specialization required for the position, subject to a report from the dean.

Time dedicated to an academic journal's editor-in-chief role is included in the faculty member's annual academic workload to facilitate this responsibility and ensure its compatibility with other academic activities.

Provided that the above requirements are met, journals may be led by more than one teaching and research staff member in the role of editor-in-chief. The role of co-editor-in-chief is formalized internally in alternating periods of at least two years, although externally, more than one staff member may appear as a journal's editor-in-chief.

The procedure for appointing the editor-in-chief of an academic journal is set out in Appendix 2.

Accordingly, their tasks are to:

- Set the editorial line.
- Draw up and implement action plans.
- Ensure fulfilment of the publication frequency quality criteria.
- Identify and reach co-publishing agreements with other academic institutions.
- Form the editorial teams: scientific committee, editorial secretary's office, etc.
- Set up and maintain the network of reviewers.
- Plan, coordinate and carry out tasks related to scientific development and attracting resources and original papers: calls for papers, collaborators, partners, co-publishers, etc.

- Coordinate the reception and management of original papers in the review system.
- Safeguard scientific integrity and ensure compliance with editorial good practices.
- Approve or reject articles proposed for publication.
- Coordinate specific communication actions: social media, newsletters and distribution lists.

Supporting documents:

- Action plan for the UOC's academic journals (see Appendix 2).

7.2. Editorial technical support service

The UOC's academic journals have a professional technical editorial support service that is responsible for the supervision and coordination of editorial production, providing editorial support for the academic team, and monitoring compliance with the communication, quality and indexing plans.

7.3. Editorial production

Academic journals must include an editorial process that guarantees professional standards of language use (correction and translation) and layout, in accordance with the standard formats for digital publication (multi-device) through a third-party company.

7.4. Language

In accordance with the international scope of scientific communication, the language policies for the full texts of the articles in the journals must focus on publishing primarily in English. The use of Catalan and Spanish will be considered under exceptional circumstances when this is justified by the knowledge area or the research community which is the target readership of the journal.

The complete article should be published primarily in one language, and translation of articles is not recommended.

The UOC's journals must set out their language policy and must provide metadata (*title*, *abstract* and *keywords*) in the university's three working languages: Catalan, Spanish and English. This increases the findability and improves the positioning of the UOC and the contents of its journals.

Depending on budgetary constraints, focus and editorial objectives, general-interest journals can publish in one language, bilingually or alternate depending on the interest of the articles, and provide translations of the articles at their discretion. Translation of metadata (*title*, *abstract* and *keywords*) is recommended.

7.5. Technology

The technological model and platform that the UOC assigns for the management of academic journals is defined by the Technology department. This model involves subcontracting a company that provides the software as a service (SaaS) and has the level of technical reliability required to provide the service and meet the needs.

Appendix 1

A1.1. Procedure for the call for applications for the position of editor-in-chief of an academic journal

When a new editor-in-chief needs to be appointed for an academic journal, the relevant faculty dean(s) will open the position following the procedure below:

A1.1.1 Notification of the process

The dean of the faculty to which the academic journal is thematically linked will announce the opening of the call for applications via email to the members of faculty.

A1.1.2. Deadline for submitting applications

Those interested in applying for the position of editor-in-chief must notify the dean of their interest within seven days of receiving notice of the vacancy.

A1.1.3. Opening of the call for applications

If more than one applicant meets the requirements set out in the previous section, a formal call for applications will be opened, enabling candidates to submit their applications (see the call document).

A1.1.4. Appointment of the faculty selection committee

The body responsible for the evaluation process, i.e. the faculty selection committee, will be appointed for each call. Members of this body will include:

- The Vice Rector for Alliances, Community and Culture, or another vice rector responsible for editorial policy;
- The dean of the faculty to which the journal is linked;
- The editor-in-chief of another UOC academic journal, put forward by the Vice Rector for Alliances, Community and Culture; and
- A representative from the Personnel department responsible for academic staff matters.

A1.1.5. Timetable

The dean will publish a timetable for the vacancy announcement process, including the deadlines for submitting applications.

A1.1.6. Submission of applications

Candidates must submit their CV and a project proposal of no more than five pages. This should include at least an action plan for the journal, expected outcomes and indicators for the following five years, and reasons for their candidacy. Applications must be sent to the email address specified by the dean.

Depending on the characteristics of each call and the number of candidates, the faculty selection committee reserves the right to request any supporting documents it deems necessary.

A1.1.7. Evaluation criteria

The faculty selection committee will evaluate the following aspects:

- Suitability of the project
- The candidate's academic knowledge and expertise in the journal's field
- The candidate's editorial knowledge and expertise in academic publishing
- The presentation of the project to the faculty selection committee
- Other relevant academic merits

A1.1.8. Outcome of the call

All teaching and research staff who applied will receive individual feedback from the faculty dean on the outcome of the call.

A1.2. Call for applications for the position of editor-in-chief of an academic journal

Call for applications for the position of editor-in-chief of [*Journal Name*]

Reporting relationship

Faculty dean

Duties of the editor-in-chief

- Set the editorial line.
- Draw up and implement action plans.
- Ensure fulfilment of the publication frequency quality criteria.
- Identify and reach co-publishing agreements with other academic institutions.
- Form the editorial teams: scientific committee, editorial secretary's office, etc.
- Set up and maintain the network of reviewers.
- Plan, coordinate and carry out tasks related to scientific development and attracting resources and original papers: calls for papers, collaborators, partners, co-publishers, etc.
- Coordinate the reception and management of original papers in the review system.
- Safeguard scientific integrity and ensure compliance with editorial good practices.
- Approve or reject articles proposed for publication.
- Coordinate specific communication actions: social media, newsletters and distribution lists.

Requirements and competencies

Requirements:

- A full-time member of the relevant faculty, with a doctoral degree
- Academic expertise in the relevant field of knowledge
- Experience in the editorial management of academic publications

Competencies:

- Global and interdisciplinary vision
- Results-oriented
- Effective communication skills
- Teamwork and team management
- Initiative and capacity for innovation

Term

The maximum term for holding a journal's editor-in-chief position is five years, renewable for an additional five years. The university's Executive Board may, in exceptional cases, extend these terms if finding a replacement is difficult due to the expertise or specialization required for the position, subject to a report from the dean.

Applications

Candidates must submit their CV and a project proposal of no more than five pages. This should include at least an action plan for the journal, expected outcomes and indicators for the following five years, and reasons for their candidacy. Applications must be sent to the email address specified by the dean. The faculty selection committee reserves the right to request any additional documents it deems necessary.

Faculty selection committee

- Vice Rector for Alliances, Community and Culture
- Dean of the faculty to which the journal is linked
- Editor-in-chief of another UOC academic journal, put forward by the Vice Rector for Alliances, Community and Culture
- Representative from the Personnel department responsible for academic staff matters

Evaluation criteria

- Suitability of the project
- The candidate's academic knowledge and expertise in the journal's field
- The candidate's editorial knowledge and expertise in academic publishing
- The presentation of the project to the faculty selection committee
- Other relevant academic merits

Appendix 2

B2.1. Action plan for the UOC's academic journals

The basic factors that should be taken into account when defining the strategic plan for a journal, for both starting a new publication and monitoring it periodically, are set out below.

B2.1.1. Details of the journal

The essential information that should be included at the start of a publishing project is set out below.

Title of the journal	
Motto (or subtitle) [opt.]	
Editor-in-chief of the journal	
Executive team	
UOC department/faculty	
*Academic director	
Name of the co-publishing institution [opt.]	
Financial contribution of the co-publishing institution [opt.]	
Related journals: identify publications with points of contact to be promoted.	
Target readership	
Frequency	
Publication formats	

* UOC dean of faculty, research unit director or Doctoral School director

B2.1.2. Objectives of the journal

Strategic objectives must be set along with a proposal of actions for their achievement within a timeframe of three years.

B2.1.3. Organization of the editorial team

Information must be provided on the roles and composition of the editorial bodies needed to run a journal.

This must cover the UOC faculty and external experts, academics, researchers and teaching staff who have accepted and are part of the editorial teams. The information that must be provided is: name and surname(s), academic affiliation.

B2.1.4. Organization of contents

Taking into account the institutional framework for action in this area, this document needs to define the specific sections that the journal will have (if applicable) with: name, abbreviations, objectives and restrictions (if applicable).

It is very important that each item of content is also well-defined: parts (e.g. for articles: title, abstract and number of words, keywords and number of keywords, images, captions, body of the article and approximate number of words, format of tables, etc.) The details of the author or person responsible for the content must also be included (name and surname, photograph, academic affiliation, contact details, etc.).

The table of contents of the first two issues must be presented, indicating which articles have been obtained and which articles have yet to be received.

B2.1.5. Peer review

An approval circuit of the contents must be designed, whether these contents have been commissioned or, if they are accepted, they come from outside the journal.

A list of reviewers to be used must be provided. Which reviewers have accepted the proposal and which have not must be stated, alongside their academic affiliation and a link to their CV.

A peer review process is not strictly necessary for general-interest journals, but a system of academic validation of the articles that are received should be applied before they are published.

B2.1.6. Quality, communication and indexing commitments and objectives

It is necessary to establish the commitment to comply with 90% of the criteria identified in the quality plan. Likewise, it is necessary to outline the communication and dissemination strategy for the articles and the journal, and to identify the path to be followed in terms of visibility and indexing.

General-interest journals may follow the recommendations and fulfil the criteria in the quality plan for general-interest journals.

B2.1.7. Editorial production

The aim is to consider the parties involved and the phases through which all the content will go, from the editorial stages through to publication of an article.

B2.1.8. Budget

The budget is prepared jointly with the management units that work with these areas, and it must provide a breakdown of the initial contribution by the UOC, the contributions of the co-publishing institutions and the distribution of expenditure by services, as well as the academic resources allocated to it and the workload percentage to be taken on.

Budget model

Area of activity	Number of people	Amount (external service)
Editorial board of the journal		
Executive management		
Executive editorial board		
Editorial secretary		
Editorial production		
Design		
Editing		
Correction (by language)		
Translation (by language)		
Layout (by format)		
DOI		
Technology		
Other expenses		